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ABSTRACT

The Self-Identity Development Model of Oppressed People (SIDMOP) is a synthesis of several areas of psychology, including developmental, cross cultural, and spiritual literatures. SIDMOP provides an all-inclusive model of identity development for oppressed minorities in the United States, regardless of ethnicity. The model was formulated from the following sources: (1) the authors' personal narratives; (2) clinical and anecdotal accounts; and (3) research literature. In addition, a male or a female were interviewed from the following groups: (1) Black; (2) Hispanic; (3) Asian American; (4) American Indian; (5) Jewish American; (6) Physically Disabled; and (7) Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual. The SIDMOP process moves through the following: (1) absence of conscious awareness; (2) transition from absence of conscious awareness to individuation; (3) individuation; (4) transition from individuation to dissonance; (5) dissonance; (6) transition from dissonance to immersion; (7) immersion; (8) transition from immersion to internalization; (9) internalization; (10) transition from internalization to integration; (11) integration; (12) transition from integration to transformation; and (13) transformation. Graphically the process can be likened to a spiral that moves along an infinity sign, illustrating the repetitive, never-ending progress through ascending levels of awareness. A table illustrates the parallels between SIDMOP and other identity development models, as well as a graphic representation. A list of references is also included. (FMW)

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Self-Identity Development Model of Oppressed People: Inclusive Model for All?

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The Self-Identity Development Model of Oppressed People (SIDMOP) is a synthesis of several areas of psychology, including developmental, cross cultural, and spiritual literatures. SIDMOP incorporates many components found in the various models of identity development for ethnic and nonethnic minority groups. Refer to Table 1. As you can see by perusing the Table, many of the stages articulated across both ethnic and nonethnic groups are similar. Given these commonalities, it made sense to us to assemble one inclusive model for all minority groups, or as we prefer to call them, all oppressed people. One further note: we have purposely chosen the term "oppressed people", rather than ethnic/nonethnic minority group, to be all inclusive--to cover all forms of oppression experienced by people in this society (e.g., age, religious belief, physical, mental, and emotional impairment, as well as the more fully articulated oppressions, such as those based on race, gender, sexual orientation). Use of this more inclusive term is not intended to minimize the experience of any individual group, but to highlight the similarities of suffering. The model was formulated from a variety of information sources: (a) our own "personal stories" (from female, Black, Japanese American, lesbian, and combined multiple oppression experiences), (b) literature of various oppressed groups, (c) clinical and anecdotal accounts, as well as (d) the little empirical work conducted with oppressed people. Based upon this collective body of knowledge, we

concluded that all oppressed people in the United States go through a similar process in their identity development.

Insert Table 1 about here

SIDMOP was created using the above information sources. In addition, a male or female from the following groups were interviewed by a member of our research team: (a) Blacks, (b) Hispanics, (c) Asian Americans, (d) Native Americans, (e) Jewish Americans, (f) Physically Challenged, (g) Gays/Lesbians/Bisexuals.

SIDMOP shares a strength of other developmental models in that the process of identity development is described, thus addressing the concept of within group differences. However, SIDMOP makes what we believe are important additions, thus making our model more comprehensive than its predecessors. First, SIDMOP articulates the concept of multiple oppression. Multiple oppression is said to occur when a person is a member of two or more oppressed groups. For example, a Black woman, who is also a lesbian, is a member of three oppressed groups. Each oppression has unique issues for the woman to deal with (being Black, a woman, and a lesbian), and the combination of oppressions--"Black lesbian"--provides a unique set of issues as well.

Second, SIDMOP explicitly articulates the psychology of world view, a concept that is not explicitly addressed in other models. In other words, the SIDMOP model is based upon a well formulated world view of peoples, in addition to describing the personal world view associated with phases of identity development (which is addressed by most models).

Third, the major tenet of the world view of peoples employed by SIDMOP is that the nature of reality is the unity of spirit and matter. This tenet is common to Afrocentric, Native American, and Eastern peoples. Therefore, specific aspects of the SIDMOP model flow directly from the world view of many oppressed peoples. When looking at Table 1, which compares SIDMOP with other developmental models, you will see that the beginning and end developmental processes are unique to SIDMOP. These additions reflect the world view from which the model emerged. These points will be developed more fully in a moment.

Before dealing with the specific aspects of SIDMOP, we would like to make some general descriptive statements about the model:

1. This model depicts the process of how oppressed people view themselves in a society in which the dominant view devalues many differences associated with oppressed people.

2. The term "oppression" refers to the suppression of any part of self based on irrelevant factors. This suppression may result from societal values, norms, and mores associated with the devaluing of differences (e.g., an aging person considered worthless). Also, this suppression may result from the individual blocking parts of him or herself (e.g., a Chicano male may deny his heritage).

3. The term "dominant societal view" refers to values, norms, and mores held by the majority of the people in the United States. These views include, but are not limited to, a valuing of what is Anglo, middle class, male, Christian, heterosexual, English speaking, young, and mentally, physically, and emotionally unimpaired.

4. "World view" is broadly defined as how a person views the world, or more specifically, how an individual construes her or his relationship to the world, including nature, institutions, people, things, etc.

5. The developmental process components labeled as "transitions" are characterized by disequilibrium as the person makes a shift in her or his world view. In some way, the person's world view has been challenged by an event or by some more gradual processes of awareness. Of the model's 13 developmental processes, six are labeled as "transitions". We believe transitions are important, because they are times when much emotional and spiritual work occurs, and the figure-ground relationship of the person's world view shifts frequently. Many other models deemphasize such transitions.

Before we describe the process of identity development, we would like to point out several assumptions upon which the model is based.

1. SIDMOP is based on the Afrocentric (Myers, 1985; 1988), Native American (Brown, 1987), and Eastern (Campbell, 1988) world views, which believe the nature of reality is both spiritual and material, with the two being inseparable. As Black Elk said: "Peace comes within the soul of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the Universe dwells Wakan-Tanka [the Great Mysterious], and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us." (Brown, 1987, p. 39). Therefore, according to this world view, we cannot talk about self-identity without talking about spiritual development. Also, as articulated in the Afrocentric world view is the concept that self-worth is intrinsic in the spirit. In other words, a person's worth comes from within and is not dependent upon what a person does (e.g., accomplishments). Thus, the

concept of human be-ing, rather than human do-ing, is basic to these world views and is incorporated to SIDMOP. As an aside, we believe this assumption of the unity of spirit and matter is universal across all peoples of the world, including the West, even though it has not been the predominant mode. Recent writings by Matthew Fox (1983) on Creation Spirituality suggest that the unity of spirit and matter has roots within Judeo Christian history and that sin is viewed as dualism, or separation; (e.g., subject/object relationships rather than I-Thou relationships), or not viewing all of life as one. When relationships are viewed in subject/object terms, there is a devaluing of the other, creating a one-up/one-down power imbalance. From the "unity of spirit and matter" perspective, those in relationship are considered equal.

2. The process of identity development proceeds in a predictable sequence. In other words, the individual experiences the developmental process in the order described. However, how much time a person spends at any point in the process may vary.

3. Because early self-identity development as an individual is relatively a universal process (related to cognitive, physiological development), the first three aspects (I. Absence of Conscious Awareness, II. Transition, and III. Individuation) are experienced by all people. It is important to include these three "common" parts of the developmental process in SIDMOP for two reasons: (a) in some way all people are oppressed, according to our definition (e.g., an Anglo male who does not express emotions or does not nurture others is considered oppressed), and (b) it is possible for oppressed people never to move into awareness of their oppression (thus not experiencing Parts IV-XIII [Transition from Individuation and Dissonance through Transformation]).

4. Consistent with the world view upon which this model is predicated, the end is also the beginning. Both the first and final parts of the process are characterized by believing in the unity of spirit and matter and the acceptance of all life. The only difference between the two is in Transformation (the final phase), where there is conscious awareness and knowledge of this belief.

5. People can reexperience things associated with previous aspects of the process as known in the present; however, the individual will encounter these experiences with a heightened level of knowledge at the unconscious and/or conscious level. We do not use the term "recycle" because it implies going back to a previous phase in development. To illustrate: a Black woman who has already experienced dissonance with her Black identity may later experience dissonance in terms of her gender. This awareness or dissonance of being female is experienced in a different way because she has already experienced dissonance with being Black.

6. Work with multiple oppressions may occur singly (i.e., one at a time). For example, to go through several parts of the process for one oppression and then experience a similar process for a different oppression. Or dealing with multiple oppressions may occur concurrently (e.g., dealing with aspects of being Black and being female at the same time). In other words, the figure-ground focus may be fairly stable for each oppression, or it may shift rapidly. This figure-ground shift can be moderated by the "zeitgeist", the person's environmental press, as well as his or her individual needs. Combinations of oppressions (e.g., being Hispanic and female) involve concerns, which are unique to the combination of multiple oppressions (e.g., being a female-Chicana in

Hispanic culture), as well as concerns for each separate oppression (e.g., being female, being Hispanic).

Now let us look at the model itself, to examine the process associated with identity development of oppressed people.

The first and thirteenth aspects of the process involve the same collective world view, that is, the unity of spirit and matter. Aspects II through XII are based on a collective world view of duality between spirit and matter.

SELF-IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL OF OPPRESSED PEOPLE (SIDMOP)

I. ABSENCE OF CONSCIOUS AWARENESS: Lack of awareness that is generally associated with infancy. The individual developmentally is unable to formulate a sense of self as separate and possesses a sense of innocence. All life is accepted as inherently good; hence, the unity of spirit and matter is the world view. EXAMPLE: The spirit of an infant at birth is pure and accepting and is untainted by the dualism of spirit and matter.

II. TRANSITION FROM ABSENCE OF CONSCIOUS AWARENESS TO INDIVIDUATION: The person begins to recognize differences between self and others. At this time the developmental issues of mastery and control are salient. Dependency on others is still a basic issue. Those closest to the individual (i.e., the family) are his or her community. Thus, differentiation on the physical plane begins. Psychologically, self-identity is tied to the family's world view and its evaluation of the child. Therefore, psychologically the child is still undifferentiated from others. EXAMPLE: A child knows she or he is physically separate from others but

psychologically is very identified with the family community. When the child is treated poorly by a parent, the child assumes he or she is a bad person.

III. INDIVIDUATION: The individual has learned the rules of society through the family and environment (e.g., school). The person is aware that people are different, and judgments made regarding these differences are affected by family/cultural values. The individual rarely experiences dissonance about the oppressed part of him or herself, because self-worth is not seen as being affected by the oppressed part. This oppressed part is out of awareness and has not consciously been examined. EXAMPLE: A person has integrated family and cultural values, and the values influence self-worth. If some element of the person is devalued, there is no conscious awarenss. A female may not be valued by her parents in the same way her brother is, but she is unable to see this.

This period is the last portion of development that is universal. If a person feels a part of and identifies with the dominant culture, he or she may never move beyond the world view articulated in this portion of the developmental process.

IV. TRANSITION FROM INDIVIDUATION TO DISSONANCE: The person encounters and is aware of an environmental stimulus (discrimination of some sort), which disrupts a sense of self. The event brings the oppressed part of self to the forefront, and as a result, the person questions her or his self-worth. The person feels less a part of society and, therefore, feels, sadness, anxiety, depression, grief, or anger to varying degrees. EXAMPLE: An elderly man is not considered for a job which he is qualified to perform. He becomes aware that his age is now more a part of his identity.

V. DISSONANCE: A person encounters the part of self that is oppressed more fully. The individual becomes more aware of his or her sense of identity. This experience triggers conflict between established self-identity and feelings of worth, and newly experienced feelings of anger or depression and low self-concept. Depending on the strength of established self-worth, the person may feel good about self and others like her or him, or the person may not. A feeling of being inadequate is more likely to occur if a person has low self worth. If a person has a strong sense of self, anger toward society is more likely to be the response to discrimination. A struggle with how much to fit into society occurs during the Dissonance process. EXAMPLE: A deaf girl is not invited to play with the children in the neighborhood. If she has a strong sense of self, she may be angry that others aren't more accepting. If she has low self-worth, she may view herself as defective and withdraw in shame.

VI. TRANSITION FROM DISSONANCE TO IMMERSION: The individual begins to look outside of self and begins to explore oppressed group culture either directly or vicariously. He or she begins to experience more positively the oppressed part of self. The dominant group view is challenged more. The culture of the oppressed group is used to validate the self. Self-identity largely is defined by the oppressed part of self. EXAMPLE: A Black student who attends a predominantly Anglo university goes to a program on Black leaders at the university. He leaves feeling more positively about his heritage.

VII. IMMERSION: The person embraces all people of the same oppressed group and has little interest in people of the dominant group. Feelings of excitement and joy about his or her connection with the oppressed group are experienced. Some conditional acceptance of people

from similar oppressed groups or of people from one's own oppressed group who have not rejected the dominant culture occurs. EXAMPLE: A Jewish man leads a Jewish student group on campus, belongs to a Jewish fraternity, and will only date Jewish women.

VIII. TRANSITION FROM IMMERSION TO INTERNALIZATION: Positive feelings about self start to come more from within (versus being gained from external sources). There is a sifting through of self-identity and group identity. World view becomes more personal, and not based on a group's rhetoric. Some discomfort about the limitations and problems within the oppressed group occurs. EXAMPLE: An Asian American woman begins to have deeper friendships with Anglo American women. She starts to form her own opinions about Anglo women and their culture and does not just believe in past stereotypes.

IX. INTERNALIZATION: The individual's community expands to includes others outside his or her group, especially people who are experiencing similar oppressions. Because of these positive feelings, the person is able to develop and follow her or his own rules even at the expense of conflict with the oppressed group's expectations. The oppressed part of self is recognized as one of many components of self-identity. The person becomes more accepting of same-group members, regardless of their place in the self-identity development process. Also, members of the dominant group may be more valued for who they are more than they were earlier in the developmental process (i.e., during Immersion.). EXAMPLE: A lesbian who has been active in the lesbian community in the past is spending her energy being a support person for a gay man with AIDS.

X. TRANSITION FROM INTERNALIZATION TO INTEGRATION: Increasing awareness that all beings struggle with some form of oppression is evident. The view that the world is "we" vs. "them" no longer seems valid. However, the person still views the oppressor differently from the oppressed. EXAMPLE: A feminist works with a fundamentalist Christian, who believes women should not work outside the home. While she strongly disagrees with his beliefs about women's roles, she is able to see that he also has some other values with which she agrees.

XI. INTEGRATION: The individual's sense of community continues to expand. As the person feels more connected to all people, she or he sees their struggles as his or her own. The focus is more on similarities between peoples. The person recognizes, understands, and experiences all oppression similarly. "Oppressors" are seen as being created by societal problems or an environmental press. EXAMPLE: A woman who was sexually abused as a child views sex offenders as victims. While she sees the offenders as being responsible for their behavior, she is able to see how the environment and their childhood upbringing also was oppressive for them.

XII. TRANSITION FROM INTEGRATION TO TRANSFORMATION: The person begins to realize the limitations of the Western world view that devalues all people, in that everyone questions their worth if they are not achieving--wealth, possessions, partners, attractiveness, etc. The individual is more able to see how the material plane is a manifestation of the spiritual. The spiritual world is the forefront and the most present in the individual. The person recognizes that all people are on the same quest for wholeness; some are just more aware of it than others. The focus of self-identity is understanding how everything fits together,

meaning how all relates to self. EXAMPLE: A man recognizes that his need to achieve and to always be better is a function of always measuring himself by external standards. He recognizes his culture perpetuates this belief, and he is much more at peace when he is in touch with his uniqueness and inherent self-worth.

XIII. TRANSFORMATION: The individual feels spiritually connected to all people, to all of life, to all of this planet, and to all of the universe. All concerns are her or his concerns. There is no separation between the spiritual and the physical, and no separation between people and all life. The person accepts all life (human and nonhuman). All is valued as inherently good. Pure acceptance of life is the commonality between Transformation and and the beginning process: I. Absence of Conscious Awareness. EXAMPLE: A woman who was sexually abused as a child views sex offenders as persons who are unable to feel the spirit within. They are people who hate themselves and feel unworthy and are trapped in a world view that keeps them "one down" or "one up".

It is difficult to precisely articulate the SIDMOP model in words; likewise, it is hard to graphically represent it. Yet with your indulgence, we will attempt to portray it pictorally. Imagine the sign for infinity (a figure 8 on its side). Refer to the diagram below. Parts I (Absence of Conscious Awareness), and XIII (Transformation) operate from the world view perspective of the unity of spirit and matter; the other components in the process (Parts II through XII) operate within the world view of the duality of spirit and matter. Their placement on the infinity sign reflects the difference in the two world views and explains why the word "Transformation" is appropriate to characterize this shift in world view.

In terms of the process itself, we have intentionally avoided the use of words such as "stage", "linear", and "recycle", because their connotations do not fit with the world view of the SIDMOP model.

Graphically, the process can be likened to a spiral that moves along the figure eight/infinity sign. Visualize the "Slinky" toy. This spiral or slinky pattern illustrates that the process is not linear, but rather is a working through the same process at heightened levels of awareness of self and /or in different environments. Each level represents a new part of oneself being brought through the process whether due to an awareness of a new oppression or being in a new environment.

Use of the infinity sign to depict the entire model seems appropriate for two reasons: First, the process is never ending; and second, the beginning merges with the ending, yet to begin over again. The visual depiction of the SIDMOP model is given below.

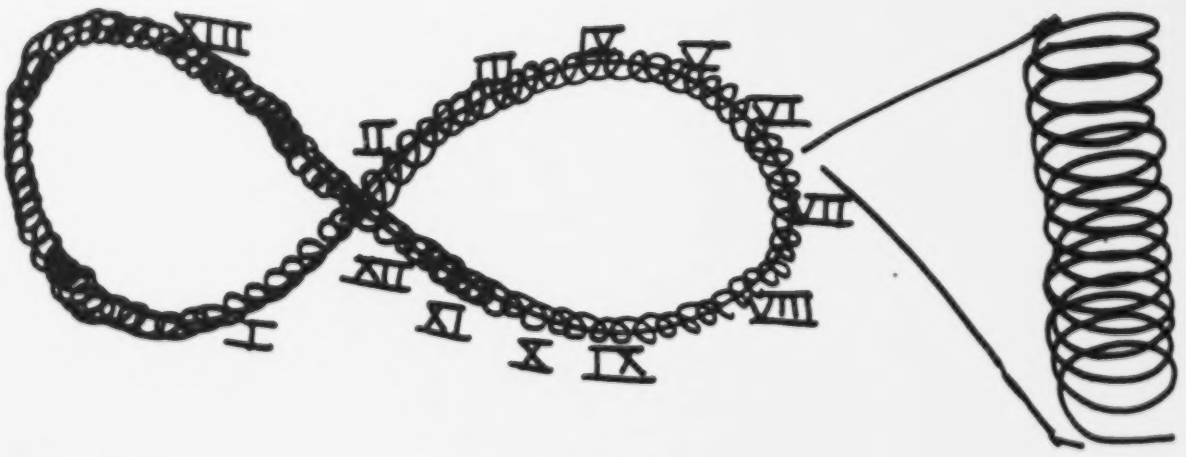

TABLE 1
PARALLELS BETWEEN SIDMOP AND OTHER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODELS FOR OPPRESSED PEOPLE

SIDMOP (Highten, et al., 1998)	Black Consciousness (Thomas, 1971)	Black Consciousness (Cross, 1971)	Homosexual Identity Formation (Cass, 1979, 1984)	Feminist Identity (Downing & Roush 1985)	Multiethnic Phases of Development (Banks, 1979)	Minority Identity Development (Atkinson et al. 1983)	Black Consciousness (Milliones (1980)	Psychosocial Stages of Woman's Liberation (Avery, 1977)
Absence of Conscious Awareness								
Transition Absence of Conscious Awareness to Individuation								
Individuation								
Transition Individuation to Dissonance		Pre-encounter					Preconscious	Before the Dawn
Dissonance	Encounter		Identity Confusion	Passive Acceptance	Ethnocentrism	Conformity		
Transition Dissonance to Immersion	Withdrawal Testifying, Information Processing		Identity Comparison, Tolerance Acceptance	Revelation		Dissonance	Confrontation	Epiphany/Click
Immersion	Activity	Immersion	Identity Pride	Embeddedness	Ethnocentricism	Resistance & Immersion		Immersion
Transition Immersion to Internalization				Emanation		Introspection		Emergence
Internalization			Identity Synthesis	Synthesis Active Commitment	Ethnosynoretism		Internalization	Internalization
Transition Internalization to Integration		Internalization			Transethnicity			Action
Integration	Transcendental				Panethnicity	Synergistic Articulation & Awareness		
Transition Integration to Transformation								
Transformation								

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